COMIC SHOP NEWS
FCBD SPECIAL
GREEN LANTERN 66

COMIC SHOP NEWS
FCBD SPECIAL
THE MIGHTY THOR

Comics: Something for Everyone!

When you mention comic books, most readers think Superman or Spider-Man or Batman or Captain America or Wonder Woman or Thor or Green Lantern—but those superhero mainstays are facets of a continually-expanding entertainment medium that truly offers something for everyone!

Western, romance, historical adventure, drama, humor, science-fiction, horror, fantasy, war, mystery—these genres, and many others, comprise the world of contemporary comic books. Anyone who thinks that the medium is only targeted at adolescent males or at aficionados of superhero power-dramas is *way* out of touch with the vitality and variety that can be found in today's comic shop.

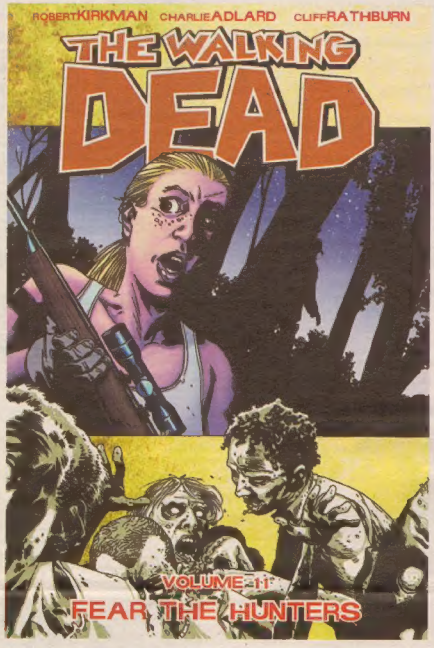
Free Comic Book Day offers an opportunity for you to sample some of that variety and find just the right comic book for your tastes—and no matter what those tastes are, there's just the right comic book for you.

The staff of your friendly neighborhood comic shop can offer you invaluable help in finding the books you'll enjoy. Talk to them, let them know what you enjoy reading or watching, and odds are they can point you to a selection of comics targeted to your interests.

This special issue of ***Comic Shop News*** is designed to help you discover some of the best comics material on the shelves today, both in periodical form as well as in special editions. Check out our lists, then check out some of the books and discover all the remarkable entertainment that you've been missing!

Top 10 Comics for FCBD

1. ***Green Lantern*** - Writer *Geoff Johns* has made DC's intrepid strong-willed ring-wielding hero a true superstar, thanks to a combination of grand SF-styled adventure, insightful characterization, and stylish storytelling. While ***Green Lantern*** is a vital part of DC's superhero universe, his adventures can be enjoyed without an encyclopedic knowledge of every other DC hero. Johns coordinated his tales with fellow writers *Peter Tomasi* and *Tony Bedard*, writers of the other books in the ***GL*** franchise—***Green Lantern Corps*** and ***Green Lantern: Emerald Warriors.***



2. ***The Walking Dead*** - *Robert Kirkman* takes an overused horror concept—the isolated island of humanity in a zombified world—and breathes new life into it. The horrifying nature of the undead zombies is made even more real by the believable human element that Kirkman brings to his beleaguered living cast in this mature-readers sophisticated horror tale.

3. ***The Flash*** (and its spinoff series, ***Flashpoint***) - The best-known speedster in DC history, Barry Allen, is back as the Flash in this hit series by *Geoff Johns & Francis Manapul* that has re-established him as a pivotal figure in the DC Universe. The Flash's time-spanning adventures have paved the way for DC's big 2011 event storyline ***Flashpoint,*** which finds the DC comics timeline altered so that the core superheroes never came into being—and it's to the Flash to figure out what went wrong and how to restore things back to the normal order!

4. ***Fear Itself*** - Star writer *Matt Fraction* launches Marvel's big event of the year with a storyline that pits Sin (the daughter of Captain America's adversary the Red Skull) and the Norse god of fear against the Marvel Universe—not only its heroes, but pretty much every human being who inhabits this marvelous world. The god of fear has chosen a "worthy" group to wield incredible powers in an effort to terrorize the Marvel Universe—and the heroes must overcome their own fears in order to confront this new and horrifying evil.

5. ***Chew*** - *John Layman's* quirky series focusing on Tony Chu, a police detective who can solve murders by taking a bite of the victims... or the killers. The eccentric

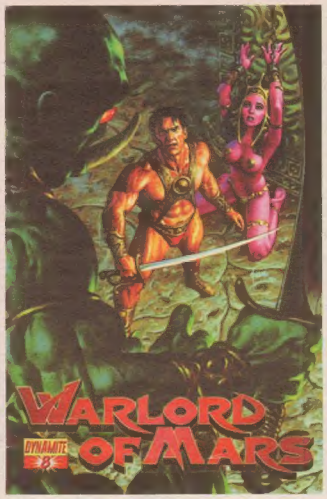
Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

and disturbing series is set in a world very much like our own, but it's the differences that make it particularly fascinating—for instance, chicken and all bird meats are illegal in Tony Chu's world after an outbreak of avian flu killed more than 20 million Americans The plot twists would be ineffective, though, if Tony Chu wasn't such a compelling character. ***Showtime*** has announced plans to produce a television seris based on this comic, so why not try it now and be ahead of the crowd?

6. ***Life With Archie—The Married Life*** - Think you know what Archie comics are like? Then you haven't sampled this fascinating, imaginative look at two possible futures: one in which Archie is married to Betty, the other in which he is married to Veronica. But as it turns out, both lives have their own distinct problems to be overcome and challenges to be met. Tbere may be some soap opera overtones to these storylines, but the trials and tribulations of young adult life make this an Archie book tailor-made for those who grew up with traditional Archie comics and are now ready for the Phase Two.

7. ***Fables*** - What happens to the fairy tale characters after the fairy tales are over? That's the question *Bill Willingham, Mark Buckingham, & Steve Leialoha* answer in this provocative and edgy fantasy drama targeted towards more sophisticated readers. These aren't tales for children—but then again, there were some pretty kid-unfriendly elements to those original fairy tales, too! It's fascinating to see the life that these fantasy mainstays have made for themselves in our modern world, and it's intriguing to see that they *didn't* necessarily live happily ever after...

8. ***Irredeemable*** - When the world's greatest superhero becomes the world's greatest super-villain, we've got a problem... and that problem makes for fascinating reading in this new series from acclaimed writer *Mark Waid.*

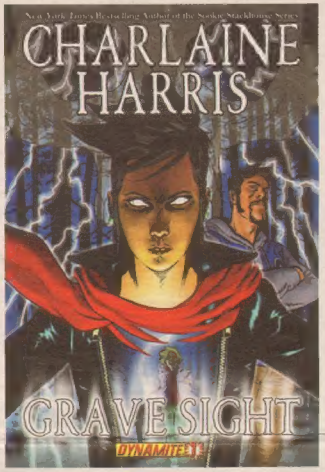


9. ***Warlord of Mars*** - *Edgar Rice Burroughs'* fantasy classic is the inspiration for this fascinating and energetic series that follows Virginian John Carter to the angry red planet, where he stand alongside princess Dejah Thoris, warrior Tars Tarkas, and other allies against all sorts of Martian menaces. *Arvid Nelson's* scripts capture the adventurous spirit of Burroughs' tales.

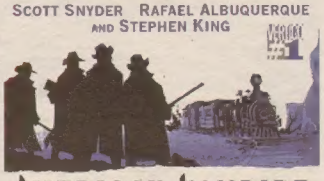
10. ***Star Wars: Darth Vader and the Lost Command*** - The villain that *Star Wars* fans love to hate is back in action in this series set soon after the events of *Revenge of the Sith.* Publisher Dark Horse has added legions of characters to the *Star Wars* mythos, but none of them will ever surpass the quintessential appeal of the black-clad, heavy-breathing Darth Vader.

The Name Seems Familiar...

If some of the names on the credits of comics seems familiar, there's a good reason: some best-selling authors, as well as the writers of highly successful television series, are also successful comic book writers. Here are a few of the writers whose comic work you might want to sample:



Charlaine Harris (The Sookie Stackhouse novels that inspired the HBO series ***True Blood***) - ***Grave Sight*** (featuring her character Harper Connolly); ***True Blood*** (based on the HBO series).



Stephen King (***The Shining, The Dead Zone, Duma Key, The Dark Tower series***) - ***American Vampires*** (King's only original-for-comics work); ***The Dark Tower—The Gunslinger Born; The Dark Tower—The Long Road Home;***

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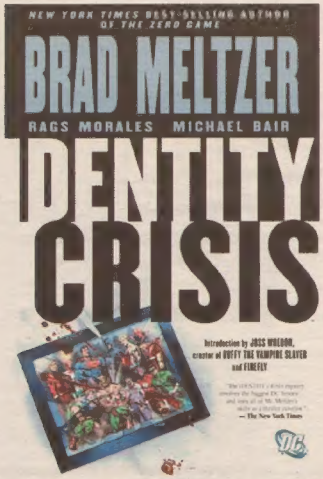
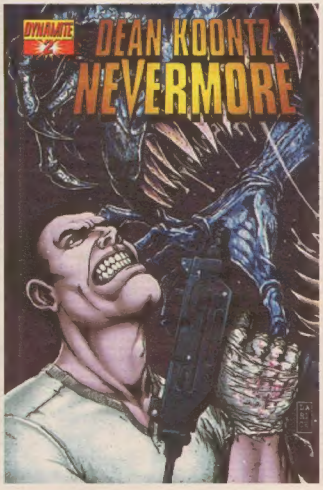
The Dark Tower— Treachery: The Dark Tower—The Fall of Gilead; The Dark Tower—The Battle of Jericho Hill; The Stand—Captain Trips; The Stand—American Nightmares; The Stand—Soul Survivors; Stephen King's N.
Jodi Picoult (*Change of Heart, The Tenth Circle, Nineteen Minutes*) - *Wonder Woman.*


NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF THE ZERO GAME
BRAD MELTZER
RAGS MORALES MICHAEL BAIR
IDENTITY CRISIS
Introduction by JOSS WHEDON, creator of BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER and FIREFLY
— The New York Times

Brad Meltzer (*The Book of Fate, The Zero Game*) - ***Justice League of America; Identity Crisis; Buffy the Vampire Slayer.***
Denise Mina (*The Dead Hour, The Field of Blood*) - ***Hellblazer.***

Orson Scott Card (***Ender's Game, Seventh Son, Red Prophet***) - ***Tales of Alvin Maker: Red Prophet; Ultimate Iron Man; Orson Scott Card's Wyrms; Ender's Game; Ender's Shadow; Formic Wars*** (an original prequel to ***Ender's Game***).
Robert Jordan - ***Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time.***
Laurell K. Hamilton (***Danse Macabre, Guilty Pleasures, Mistral's Kiss***) - ***Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter: Guilty Pleasures; Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter: The Laughing Corpse.***

Neil Gaiman (***American Gods, Neverwhere***) - ***Sandman; The Eternals; Marvel 1602, Books of Magic; Death: The High Cost of Living.***
Greg Rucka (***Keeper, Finder, Whiteout***) - ***Queen & Country; 52; Checkmate; Stumptown; Whiteout; Batwoman; The Punisher*** (coming this summer).
Clive Barker (***The Great & Secret Show, Books of Blood***) - ***Hellraiser; Clive Barker's Great & Secret Show; Clive Barker's Seduth.***
Jim Butcher (***Dresden Files***) - ***Jim Butcher's Dresden Files—Welcome to the Jungle; Dresden Files—Storm Front.***
Dean Koontz (***Darkest Evening of the Year, The Good Guy, Odd Hours***) - ***Dean Koontz's Frankenstein; In Odd We Trust*** (an original manga featuring Koontz's Odd Thomas); and ***Dean Koontz's Nevermore*** (an original SF-fantasy adventure tale of alternate realities created by Koontz for the Dabel Brothers publishing imprint).

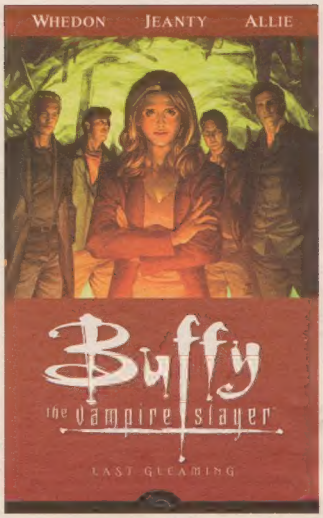


Patricia Briggs - ***Patricia Briggs' Mercy Thompson.***
C.E. Murphy - ***C.E. Murphy's Take a Chance*** (an original superhero drama).
George R.R. Martin - ***George R.R. Martin's Wild Cards; Hedge Knight; Fevre Dream: George R.R. Martin's Doorways.***

And of course, there are numerous adaptations of literary classics by *Bram Stoker, L. Frank Baum, Robert Louis Stevenson, Homer, Herman Melville,* and many others.

Television and Screenwriters

Joss Whedon (***Firefly/Serenity, Angel, Buffy the Vampire Slayer***) - ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer; Angel; Serenity; Runaways; Astonishing X-Men; Dr. Horrible.***
Brian K. Vaughan (***Lost***) - ***Y—The Last Man; Ex Machina; Logan; Runaways.***



J. Michael Straczynski (**Babylon 5**) - ***The Brave & the Bold; The Twelve; Supreme; Superman; Wonder Woman; Superman: Earth One.***
Marc Guggenheim (**Eli Stone, Lost**) - ***Young X-Men; Wolverine; Flash; Resurrection; Stephen King's N; Justice Society of America; Halcyon.***
Kevin Smith (**Clerks, Chasing Amy**) - ***Kevin Smith's Green Hornet; Batman—Widening Gyre; Batman: Cacophony; Green Arrow, Daredevil, Spider-Man/Black Cat: The Evil That Men Do.***
Richard Donner (**Superman**) - ***Superman: Last Son.***
Javier Grillo-Marxuach (**Middleman, Medium, Lost, The Dead Zone**) - ***Battlestar: Galactica—Cylon Apocalypse; Middleman.***
Mark Verheiden (**Smallville, Battlestar: Galactica, Timecop**) - ***Superman/Batman***
Jeph Loeb (**Lost**) - ***Superman/Batman; Hulk; Ultimates 3, Ultimatum; Spider-Man—Blue; Daredevil—Yellow; Hulk—Grey.***

Top Ten Classic Reprints

1. ***The Life & Times of Scrooge McDuck*** - *Don Rosa* reveals how Scrooge McDuck became the richest—and most miserly—duck in the Disneyverse in this far-reaching story that blends history and adventure in a most incredible way. *Carl Barks* blazed the trail with his amazing stories of Scrooge, Donald, and the three nephews, but it was Rosa who pulled threads from Barks' many tales and worked them into this grand fictional tapestry.

2. ***Complete Peanuts Volume Nine***- This volume, which collects strips from 1967 and 1968, presents *Charles Schulz* at the top of his game. Snoopy the WWI flying ace, the development of Peppermint Patty as a major Peanuts characters, and the introduction of ***Peanuts***' first black character, Franklin. Schultz alternates between poignant, acerbic, sarcastic, and observational in this collection of some of the most beloved strips in ***Peanuts*** history.

CAN THE WORLD'S MOST OUT-NUMBERED CRIME FIGHTER COME BACK?
THE SPIRIT
BY WILL EISNER
NOT NOW! I HAVEN'T RESCUED YOU YET...
WHO IS THE SPIRIT?...AND HOW DID HE COME TO BE?

3. ***Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus Volume 1 HC***- From the very beginning, *Stan Lee & Steve Ditko* made Spider-Man a distinctively different superhero—angst-driven, socially frustrated, guilt-ridden, and overwhelmed by responsibility, Peter Parker struggled to find balance in his life. This volume makes it easy for readers to discover why Lee & Ditko's Spider-Man was such a hit, as it collects every single Spider-Man tale the duo produced, from his introduction in ***Amazing Fantasy #15*** to their final collaboration in ***Amazing Spider-Man #38.*** That's 39 issues plus two annuals, and it includes the first appearance of every major villain in Spidey's rogues gallery.

4. ***Flash Archives Volume Three*** - Comic book history is made in this landmark collection that contains "Flash of Two Worlds," the first story to bridge the gap between the Golden Age and the Silver Age. All the twists and turns of comic book continuity are born in this remarkable tale. Every story is energetic, tight, and plot-driven, and *Carmine Infantino's* Flash conveys a visual elegance that no artist since then has been able to duplicate.

5. ***Spirit Volume Eleven*** - There are no bad volumes of this *Will Eisner* classic, but ***Volume Eleven*** is the first Eisner-produced volume after he returned home from WWII. In its pages, readers will see what happens when artistic genius, pent up for years, is allowed to run free. The strip blossoms from a cleverly done, well-illustrated adventure strip to the sort of full-bore human interest storytelling that Eisner is famous for.

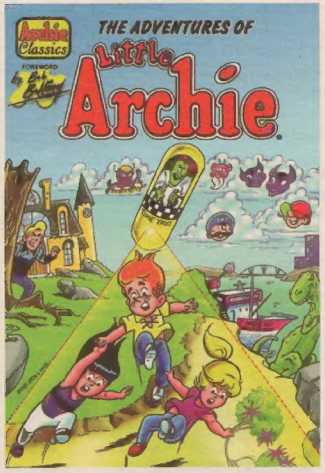
6. ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents Volume One*** - Energized by the success of Marvel's bold reinvention of the superhero field, *Wally Wood* and a band of top talents from both Marvel and DC (including ***Amazing Spider-Man's*** *Steve Ditko* and ***Justice League of America's*** *Mike Sekowsky)* create a new comic book world that blends the vitality of Marvel's books with the superspies-at-war angle of James Bond and ***The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*** And because it's all being built from the ground up right here, there's no backstory to confuse newcomers.

7. ***Prince Valiant Volume 1: 1937-1938 HC*** - This volume collects the first two years of *Hal Foster's* stunning medieval adventure strip, reproduced from the original proof sheets to ensure that these full-color Sunday strips look better here than they did when they were originally published in newspapers almost three-quarters of a century ago.

8. ***Conan Chronicles Volume Four*** - From the very first issue of ***Conan***, it was evident that *Barry Windsor-Smith* was a talent to be reckoned with—but in this collection of Smith's final issues, his full artistic genius is in evidence. Who else would have attempted to bring the Pre-Raphaelite movement to adventure comics? And adventure fans won't find a storyteller more faithful to *Robert E. Howard's* vision of Conan than

Roy Thomas, who offers both original stories and adaptations in this collection. Highlights include the first appearance of Red Sonja and the ultimate Conan tale, "Red Nails."

9. ***Showcase Presents Superman Volume One*** - In retrospect, it's amazing how many imaginative ideas got packed into these late 1950's-early 1960's *Mort Weisinger*-edited Superman adventures. There are a few formula stories, but these 500+ black and white pages are packed to overflowing with the ideas and concepts that have become a part of Superman's canon today.



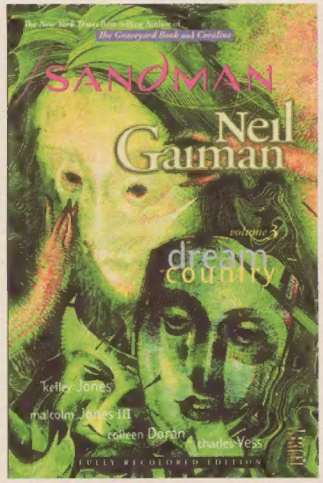
10. ***Adventures of Little Archie Volume One*** - *Bob Bolling's* tales of Archie when he was a boy are far from Archie's typical teen sitcom misadventures. These charming stories, which blend humor, drama, and adventure, convey the sense of wonder of childhood while fleshing out the personalities of Archie, Betty, Veronica, and the rest of the Riverdale gang.

Top Ten Non-Superhero GNs

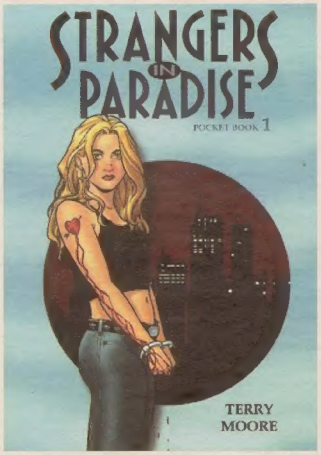
1. ***Maus—A Survivor's Tale*** - *Art Spiegleman's* Pulitzer-prize-winning anthropomorphic allegory is perhaps the most powerful tale of survival and suffering ever presented in comic book form. This graphic novel recasts the Holocaust as a grim struggle between oppressed mice and controlling cats—but it's more than just a war story. ***Maus*** is also the story of a son struggling to connect with a father who was a Holocaust survivor. It's an amazing work, complex and moving.

2. ***The Walking Dead Volume 1*** - *Robert Kirkman* introduces the most compelling zombie drama ever told in *any* medium in this fascinating series. The human struggle to survive against horrifying odds is a powerful element of Kirkman's sophisticated character-driven tale. Once you've tried the first volume, you'll almost certainly want to follow the saga through. AMC's hit television series has made ***Walking Dead*** a top-selling graphic novel series, and there's no better place to start than with the first volume!

3. ***Blankets*** - *Craig Thompson* takes the phrase "graphic novel" very seriously, creating a massive novel-length, intensely personal tale of love (both romantic and brotherly) and faith. This coming of age drama is distinctive in both its size and its artistic accomplishment.

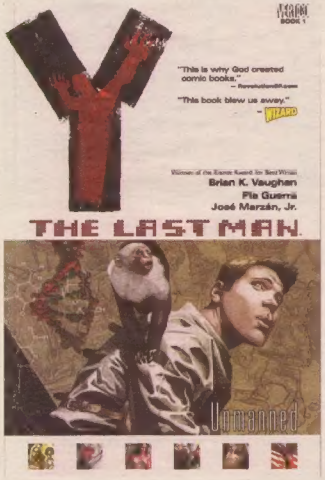


4. ***Sandman Vol 3: Dream Country*** - You can't go wrong with any collection of *Neil Gaiman's* superb ***Sandman,*** but this one stands out thanks to two remarkable stories: "Dream of a Thousand Cats," a tale both touching and disturbing in its vision of a cat's dreams; and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which reveals just where Shakespeare came up with those remarkable plays. (And after you read the latter, you might want to take a look at the final story from ***Sandman Volume 10,*** which offers a poignant glimpse at Shakespeare's final days.) Gaiman taps into the mythic with his tales of the Endless and their control of our lives... and our deaths.



5. ***Strangers in Paradise Pocket Edition Volume One*** - *Terry Moore* introduces readers to Francine and Katchoo, two of the most fascinating and believable women in comics. Their friendships, their relationships with David and other men, their complicated and problematic lives all form the basis of this fascinating look at love, friendship, and loss. Moore's complete ***Strangers in Paradise*** saga is one of the most perfectly executed long-form series in comics history, building to an ending so perfect that you couldn't envision Moore closing it out any other way. Try the first volume and you'll be hooked!

6. ***Y—The Last Man Volume 1*** - *Brian K. Vaughan & Pia Guerra* focus on a world thrown into turmoil by the sudden an inexplicable death of all creatures with a Y chromosome... all, that is, except for one man, Yorick Brown, and one monkey. What made them survive is one of the ongoing mysteries of this smart, sophisticated ten-book series—but how society copes with the loss of all men is both fascinating and thought-provoking. One book is all it will take to hook you on this series (a series that delivers one the most satisfying endings since HBO's *Six Feet Under*).

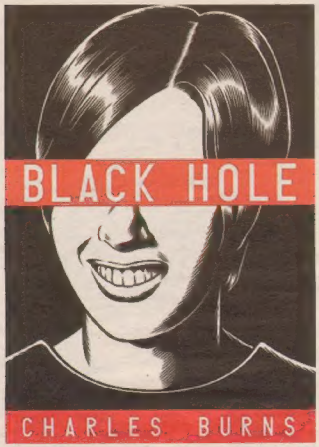


7. ***League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*** - The ultimate literary adventure, this far-reaching melodrama by *Alan Moore & Kevin O'Neill* brings together the Invisible Man, Dr. Jekyll, Mina Harker, Captain Nemo, and Alan Quartermain, united to form a sort of literary Justice League for a globe-spanning adventure positively packed with allusions to Victorian literature, popular fiction, and cultural icons. Read this one the first time for the story, then read it again to see how much you missed.

I WILL BE THE FIRST ON LAND!
HMM... APPEARS THE BUGS ARE ALREADY THERE!
DON'T WORRY—THEY WON'T GET THE CREDIT!
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE MY DESCENDANTS WILL WRITE THE BOOK!

8. ***Cartoon History of the Universe*** (multiple volumes available) - *Larry Gonick's* wry, irreverent approach to history is absolutely addictive—and wholly educational! While he relies on silliness and sarcasm to entertain, he

always remains true to history—and to support his take on events, he offers a full bibliography at the end of each volume. The layman with a casual knowledge of history is going to be captivated by this, but there's enough information here to intrigue even the most schooled historian.

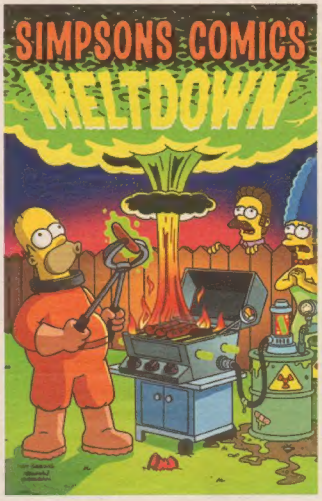


9. ***Black Hole*** - *Charles Burns* nightmarish tale of teenages stricken with a mysterious sexually transmitted plague that causes bizarre mutations is almost *Hieronymous Bosch*-like in his haunting tone and its disturbing subtext. Burns' graphic novel works as a powerful story of horrifying transformation and as an allegory on the transition from adolescence to adulthood—and it's equally disquieting on both levels.

10. ***Persepolis*** - *Marjane Satrapi* offers a moving look at a young girl's life under the Islamic Revolution. Satrapi's autobiographical tale is a disturbing example that "the devil that you know may be better than the devil you don't." The book never ventures into stridence or mawkishness; instead, Satrapi's keen storytelling takes readers into a world that most of us have never envisioned.

Top Ten All-Ages

1. ***Sonic the Hedgehog*** - The virtual granddaddy of the all-ages market, ***Sonic*** has been at the top of the heap for more than a decade now. Without a doubt the most accessible of all videogame-inspired comics, ***Sonic*** has tremendous young-reader appeal and one of the most dedicated audiences of any comic. (There's an entire series of collected volumes available as well, just perfect for readers who'd like to enjoy the series from the very beginning!)



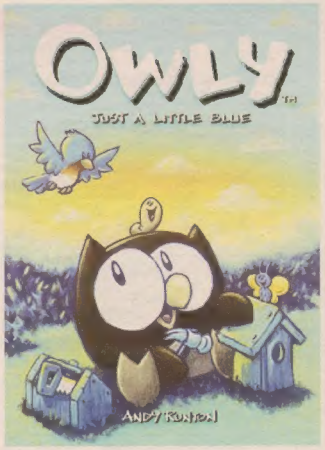
2. ***The Simpsons*** -*Matt Groening* didn't license his hit animated series out to a third-party publisher; instead, he chose to start his *own* publishing company, Bongo Comics, to make sure that the comic captures the same irreverently charming tone that has kept this series at the top of Fox-TV's ratings charts for oh-so-many years. (Early issues are available in the ***Simpsons Classics*** magazine and in a number of collected volumes.)

3. ***Archie*** - Let's face it, you can't go wrong with *any* Archie title. The Riverdale Gang is almost instantly familiar, the archetypal high school-kid cast has a sort of comic-strip feel that's accessible parents and children alike, and there's a timeless quality to the stories that makes nostalgic parents feel comfortable introducing the comic to the next generation of readers. The recent storyline in which Archie imagined two alternative futures—one in which he married Veronica, the other in which he married Betty—brought Archie back into the spotlight again... and brought legions of new readers to the timeless tales of the Riverdale gang. (There are several trade paperback compilations and a whole line of monthly digests, but parents are sure to find the "decades" series of trades—***Archie in the Forties, the Fifties,*** etc.—irresistible.)

4. ***Tiny Titans*** - This isn't a comic based on a cartoon; instead, it's an original DC creation that recasts the Teen Titans as elementary school tykes, confronting them with the sort of childhood adventures that will seem very real to younger readers. This is low-violence, problem-solving sort of storytelling with an enduring charm. (A second DC series, ***Super Friends,*** presents the same sort of values-positive storytelling using Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and other DC heroes as the primary characters.)

5. ***Spongebob Squarepants*** - The same creators responsible for ***The Simpsons*** comics bring this children's favorite to the printed page with original short stories that capture the appealing whimsy of the ***Spongebob*** animated series.

6. ***Super Friends*** - DC's most famous superheroes star in this young-reader-friendly series that spotlights teamwork and problem-solving rather than super-powered punch-em-outs.



7. ***Owly*** - This remarkable wordless comic by *Andy Runton* is perfect for younger readers as well as for those all-ages readers who have fond memories of such wordless comic strips as ***Henry***. The charm lies in the visuals-only approach, which utlilizes skillful visual storytelling and charming characters to create memorable stories that hold up for multiple "readings."

8. ***The Muppet Show*** - Fast-paced and personable, this new comic book from Boom Studios captures the madcap energy and charming humor of *Jim Henson's* famous creations. The same publisher is also producing Muppet retellings of famous stories like Robin Hood, filled with the same Muppet whimsy.

9. ***Scooby-Doo*** - Ruh-Ro... Thought we were going to forget the doggie detective and his gang, didn't you? Forty years of cartoons and a couple of big-budget films make Scooby, Shaggy, and the gang instantly recognizable to grandparents, parents, and kids—and the comic book stories are frequently more engaging than the original cartoons! (Digests reprinting early ***Scooby*** stories are also available.)

10. ***Little Lulu*** - It's no wonder that Lulu has become a female icon—she's independent, resourceful, bold, adventurous, and not above helping her bumbling friend Tubby when he gets in over his head. These stories by *John Stanley & Irving Tripp*, which present Lulu at her best, will make you wish that they still made comics like this.

Top Ten Manga

1. ***Lone Wolf & Cub*** - *Kazuo Koike & Goseki Kojima* are the masterminds behind the greatest manga series of them all, a sprawling epic starring a vengeful ronin and his young son as he embarks on a quest for vengeance and a parental quest for a better life for his infant child. If it seems familiar, there could be good reason: ***The Road to Perdition*** was inspired by this historical saga.

2. ***Ranma 1/2*** - *Rumiko Takahashi's* comic farce focuses on a young man whose dunk in a cursed spring has major after-effects: any time he's splashed with cold water, he turns into a young girl, and he's stuck that way until a dash of hot water changes him back. ***Ranma 1/2*** is funny, fast-paced, sometimes absurd, but always entertaining.

3. ***Gunsmith Cats*** - Rally and May run a gun shop in Chicago—but it's their sideline work as bounty hunters that provides all the excitement in this fast-paced, high-impact adventure produced by acclaimed manga creator *Kenichi Sonoda*.

4. ***Naruto*** - This brash comedy-drama tale of a young ninja's quest for accomplishment and approval has found an eager audience among American readers, no doubt helped by the anime's television success. The development and maturation of Naruto and his friends transforms them from stereotypes to appealing characters, making this an exciting story with a positive message.

5. ***Inu Yasha*** - Fans of epic fantasy quests will feel right at home with manga master *Rumiko Takahashi's* story of a time-travelling schoolgirl and her companions—a half-demon, a monk, a demon slayer, and others—as they search for the fragments of the powerful Jewel of Four Souls.

6. ***Akira*** - *Katsuhiro Otomo's* post-apocalyptic cyberpunk adventure focuses on young outcasts with incredible mental powers who find themselves at odds with a secret government project that hopes to harness the abilities of outcasts. This dark, moody drama, epic in scope, raised the bar for manga storytelling, inspiring an animated film and an upcoming live-action production.

7. ***Rurouni Kenshin*** - The exploits of a wandering assassin turned defender of the common people remains one of the most popular manga in Japan and the US. Set in the early Meiji period in Japan, *Nobuhiro Watsuki's* engaging adventure series is less grim and brutal than ***Lone Wolf & Cub***, making it suitable for younger manga fans.

8. ***Bleach*** - No, it's not the story of a hair colorist. ***Bleach*** is the tale of a teenager who can see dead people, and a soul harvester who calls on the young Ichigo to help complete her mission. This is another manga that has benefited from a strong anime schedule, but the series' engaging characters and intriguing supernatural angle make it a natural for fantasy-adventure fans.

9. ***Ghost in the Shell*** - A complex cyberpunk tale by *Masamune Shirow*, ***Ghost in the Shell*** is driven by its captivating visual style. The the haunting and suspenseful cat-and-mouse story focuses on a cybernetically enhanced agent on the trail of a data thief who seems to be just as keenly interested in the agent as she is in him. The multi-layered story is mature in theme and content, but it delivers in a way that all too few cyberpunk-themed comics ever do.

10. ***Berserk*** - *Kentaro Miura's* harsh, grim, brutal tale is set in medieval Japan, where a mercenary warrior named Guts struggles to find his place in a brutal world filled with hardship and betrayal. This unrelentingly violent tale is perfect for fans of *Akira Kurosawa's* films samurai film.